

# **FIREFIGHTER SELECTION PROCESS**

**An informational guide  
for interested candidates**



**City of Santa Clara  
Human Resources Department**

*The information contained herein is subject to change and does not constitute either an expressed or implied contract.*

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## OVERVIEW

This guide is designed for individuals interested in pursuing a career as a Firefighter with the Santa Clara Fire Department. The official Job Announcement for Firefighter can be found online at [http://santaclaraca.gov/hu\\_resources/firefighter.html](http://santaclaraca.gov/hu_resources/firefighter.html).

Candidates are advised to carefully review this guide in addition to the official Firefighter Job Announcement, paying particular attention to the minimum qualifications and the selection process timeline. Please submit an Employment Application and Supplemental Application only if you meet the minimum qualifications for this position.

Below is the tentative timeline for the 2008 Firefighter selection process (details on the process are provided on pages 5 – 6 of this guide):

FIREFIGHTER SELECTION PROCESS	
COMPONENT	TENTATIVE DATES
<b>Job Advertised</b>	Tuesday, May 13, 2008 - Thursday, May 29, 2008
<b>Application Packets Due</b> <i>Application packets will not be accepted prior to May 27, 2008 (8am) or after Thursday, May 29, 2008 (4pm).</i>	Tuesday, May 27 (8am) – Thursday, May 29, 2008 (4 pm)
<b>Written Examination</b> <i>Weighted Pass/Fail</i>	Saturday, June 14, 2008 (No rescheduling will be allowed)
<b>Oral Examination #1 **</b> <i>Weighted Pass/Fail</i>	Week of June 23, 2008 (tentative)
<b>Oral Examination #2 **</b> <i>Weighted 100% (Paramedic Interviews will also be conducted)</i>	Week of July 14, 2008 (tentative)
<b>Performance (Physical Ability) Examination **</b> <i>Weighted Pass/Fail</i>	Week of August 11, 2008 (tentative)
<b>Departmental Interviews</b> <i>Chief's Oral Interviews</i>	August 19, 20 & 21, 2008 (tentative)
<b>Background investigation, polygraph, medical examination, and drug screening</b>	After conditional offer of employment
<b>Firefighter Academy</b>	October 2008 (approx. 10 – 12 weeks)

\*\* The Oral #1 and #2 Examinations and Performance (Physical Ability) Examination will be conducted between the hours of 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. The number of days will depend on the number of candidates being invited to the examinations.

## THE POSITION

Firefighting involves extremely difficult and dangerous physical work, often involving emergency and life-or-death situations. The physical and mental demands of the job are considerable and the selection process is challenging. The Santa Clara Fire Department is a paramilitary organization with a clearly defined chain of command that must be followed. All personnel must adhere to established standards regarding personal conduct and grooming. Adherence to discipline is a mandatory responsibility of each member of the Santa Clara Fire Department.

Once hired into the position, a Firefighter will be assigned to an extensive Firefighter Academy to learn the basic skills necessary to perform the job. After graduating from the Academy, the typical work schedule for a Santa Clara Firefighter consists of 24-hour shifts, averaging 56 hours per week. In the span of 24 calendar days, a Firefighter will work eight 24-hour shifts.

Upon graduation from the Academy, each Firefighter will be assigned to a company for a three-month interval. During this time, probationary Firefighters continue to receive training from the Department and are expected to study on their own. During Department drills, each Firefighter is expected to pay attention, observe the techniques being demonstrated, participate actively, and ask questions. There are defined study and drill requirements that must be met; a formal evaluation will be conducted each month by the Company Officer. After the initial three-month period, the probationary Firefighter will be assigned to another company for three-month intervals during the probationary period. The Training Division will also monitor the progress and skill level of each probationary Firefighter with periodic testing that will take the form of written, manipulative and oral examinations. It is expected that a probationary Firefighter will successfully pass all of these examinations.

New Firefighters must successfully complete the 12-month probationary period to be considered for permanent appointment to the position.

The complete job description, salary schedule, summary of benefits, and Memorandum of Understanding for this position can be found online at [http://santaclaraca.gov/hu\\_resources/hr\\_dept.html](http://santaclaraca.gov/hu_resources/hr_dept.html).

### **Qualifications**

To participate in the selection process, interested candidates must meet all of the following requirements at time of application:

- ☐ Graduation from high school or equivalent
- ☐ At least 21 years of age (Must be born on or before May 29, 1987)

The following requirements must be met prior to appointment to the position:

- ☐ A valid California driver's license
- ☐ A valid California or National Registry Emergency Medical Technician – I (EMT-I) certificate
- ☐ For candidates interested in paramedic assignments, a valid California or National Registry Emergency Medical Technician – Paramedic (EMT-P) license (not a requirement for the position of Firefighter)

# THE SELECTION PROCESS

## **Application Packets Accepted: Tuesday, May 27 (8am) – Thursday, May 29, 2008 (4pm)**

All individuals interested in applying for the position of Firefighter should first review the qualifications. Candidates who meet these qualifications must submit a completed City of Santa Clara Employment Application, Firefighter Supplemental Application, and any certifications to the **City of Santa Clara Human Resources Department**, located at City Hall, West Wing – Lower Level, 1500 Warburton Avenue, Santa Clara, CA 95050. Candidates must submit their application materials between Tuesday, May 27 (8:00 am) – Thursday, May 29, 2008 (4:00 pm). Applications may be submitted in person, by mail, by e-mail to [humanresources@santaclaraca.gov](mailto:humanresources@santaclaraca.gov), or by fax to 408-247-5627. Any additional materials (resumes, cover letters, or transcripts) submitted will not be reviewed. Candidates will be disqualified if they do not meet the minimum qualifications or if they submit a late or incomplete application packet. Postmarks will not be accepted.

All individuals interested in applying for this position must submit an official City of Santa Clara Employment Application, Firefighter Supplemental Application, and any certifications to the City of Santa Clara Human Resources Department, located at City Hall, - Lower Level, 1500 Warburton Avenue, Santa Clara, CA, 95050. All applications will be screened to ensure candidates meet the minimum qualifications. If that number is approximately 500, all qualified candidates will be invited to take the written examination. If the pool of candidates is larger than 500, the supplemental application will be used to further screen the candidates and a randomized lottery may be used to limit the applicant pool to approximately 500 qualified candidates.

## **Preference Points:**

To qualify for Preference Points, proof must be submitted by the application packet final filing date and time. For **Santa Clara Volunteer/Reserve Firefighter's Preference Points**, applicants must submit proof of eligibility, as specified in Section 2.20 of the City of Santa Clara Civil Service Rules and Regulations. For **Veteran's Preference Points**, applicants who have separated from military service (Active Duty Status) must submit proof of honorable discharge (Form DD214) as specified in Section 2.22 of the City of Santa Clara Civil Service Rules and Regulations. The Civil Service Rules and Regulations are available online at <http://santaclaraca.gov/pdf/collateral/3013-CivilServiceRulesAndAgreements.pdf>

## **Written Examination: Saturday, June 14, 2008**

Application packets submitted by the filing deadline will be carefully reviewed to identify those candidates who meet the minimum qualifications for this position. **Candidates who meet the minimum qualifications and who submitted complete and timely application packets** will be invited to participate in the written examination if the qualified applicant pool does not exceed approximately 500. Unfortunately, the City lacks the resources to allow an unlimited number of candidates to participate in the Firefighter selection process. All applications will be screened to ensure candidates meet the minimum qualifications. If that number is approximately 500, all qualified candidates will be invited to take the written examination. If the pool of candidates is larger than 500, the supplemental application will be used to further screen the candidates and a randomized lottery may be used to limit the applicant pool to approximately 500 qualified candidates. Qualified candidates chosen through the lottery will be invited to participate in a written examination, scheduled for **Saturday, June 14, 2008**. Notices will be mailed to candidates the week of June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Oral Examination #1**

Depending on logistical considerations and the size of the applicant pool, it is possible that only those **candidates earning the highest passing scores on the written examination** will be invited to participate in the first oral examination, which is weighted pass/fail. The first oral examination is tentatively scheduled for the **week of June 23, 2008**. The oral examination #1 will be scheduled between 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.

Candidates who pass the written examination but do not earn an invitation to the first oral examination will remain eligible to participate in a future oral examination if deemed necessary by the City.

**Oral Examination #2**

**Candidates who pass the first oral examination** will be invited to participate in the second oral examination, which is weighted 100%. The second oral examination is tentatively scheduled for the **week of July 14, 2008**. The oral examination #2 will be scheduled between 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.

**Performance (Physical Ability) Examination**

Depending on logistical considerations and the size of the applicant pool, it is possible that only those **candidates earning the highest passing scores on the second oral examination** will be invited to participate in the performance examination, which is weighted pass/fail. The performance examination is tentatively scheduled for the **week of August 11, 2008**. The performance (physical ability) examination will be scheduled between 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.

Candidates who pass the second oral examination but do not earn an invitation to the performance examination will remain eligible to participate in a future performance examination if deemed necessary by the City.

**Departmental Interviews**

Only those **candidates who successfully pass all phases of the selection process will earn placement on the eligible list**, which may be used for current and future vacancies in the job classification during the life of the eligible list. Placement on the eligible list does not guarantee nor imply that a job offer will follow. Certification of eligible candidates will be made each time the Fire Department intends to fill a vacant position. Candidates in the top ten ranks will be certified for one vacant position, with an additional rank certified for each additional vacancy. The fire department anticipates filling approximately 10 vacant positions.

Candidates certified to the Fire Department will be contacted to schedule a departmental interview (Chief's oral interview). The Chief will make selections from this group of candidates. Candidates not immediately selected will remain on the eligible list until its expiration (typically one year) and may be contacted for future vacancies.

Candidates interested in a paramedic assignment will be invited to an additional interview designed to assess Advanced Life Support qualifications. The paramedic interview will not affect candidates' rankings on the Firefighter eligible list.

**Final Steps**

If given a conditional offer of employment, candidates will be required to pass a background investigation, polygraph, psychological, medical examination, and drug screening prior to appointment.

**Firefighter Academy**

Candidates hired into the position of Firefighter are tentatively scheduled to begin the Firefighter Academy tentatively scheduled for October 2008. The Academy is expected to last approximately 10 – 12 weeks.

# EXAMINATION PREPARATION

## **General**

Before applying for any job, it is wise

to research on the position and the organization. In addition to reviewing this guide, candidates may find it useful to talk directly with Santa Clara Firefighters and visit the Santa Clara Fire Department website at <http://fire.santaclaraca.gov/>.

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## **Written Examination**

The entry-level Firefighter written examination is designed to assess the skills and aptitudes necessary to succeed as a Firefighter. Specifically, the written examination is generally designed to measure the ability to understand and remember written and oral information, perform basic mathematics, and understand mechanical principles and diagrams. The examination will include approximately 100 multiple-choice questions, each with four possible answers. Candidates will be allowed up to two hours to complete the written examination. Calculators will be allowed.

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## **Oral Examination #1 and #2**

The first oral examination is a brief panel interview (up to 15 minutes) that is designed to assess the candidates' qualifications in areas such as motivation and preparation for a career in the fire service, understanding of and interest in the position, and personal characteristics.

The second oral examination is a more in-depth panel interview (up to 30 minutes). While this examination may further evaluate the areas assessed in the first oral interview, it is also designed to assess candidates in competencies such as interpersonal skills, oral communication, and analytical skills.

It is to your advantage to listen carefully to the questions asked and completely and directly answer each question. You should be completely honest and provide a clear and concise summary of your qualifications. As with any interview, you should speak clearly and use proper grammar. Since each examination will have a time limit, it will be your responsibility to manage your time effectively.

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## **Performance (Physical Ability) Examination**

The performance examination consists of three events: aerial ladder climb, equipment/ladder removal and carry, and emergency response. A brief summary of these events is listed below; more detailed information will be provided at a later date.

In the aerial climb event, candidates will be instructed to climb to the top of an aerial ladder truck where the ladder has been raised to a height of 80 feet, at a 70-degree climbing angle. This event is pass/fail and is not timed.

The equipment/ladder removal and carry event simulates a candidate's ability to remove and replace equipment from an upper compartment of a fire engine and to remove and carry a 24-foot extension ladder a distance of 100 feet. This event is pass/fail and is not timed.

The emergency response event is designed to assess a candidate's ability to perform a series of physically demanding job tasks while wearing a turnout coat, gloves, helmet, safety belt, and self-contained breathing unit. The event contains two components that are intended to simulate required performance under emergency conditions: high-rise response and advance hose/victim rescue. This event is pass/fail with a time limit of 10 minutes and 30 seconds.

Preparation for the performance examination can be accomplished by a physical training program that emphasizes cardiorespiratory (heart/lung) fitness, muscular strength, and endurance.

## THE DEPARTMENT

The mission of the Santa Clara Fire Department is to protect the citizens of Santa Clara from injury and loss due to natural and man-made disasters. This mission is accomplished by providing highly trained and equipped emergency personnel to respond to incidents of fire, flood, chemical release and medical emergencies within three minutes after notification and by protecting property prior to an emergency with pre-fire planning, fire code inspections, and public education programs in commercial and residential fire safety.

The Santa Clara Fire Department currently consists of approximately 180 employees (including 59, as of 4/22/08, in the classification of Firefighter) and has a budget of \$31.7 million. Ten fire stations serve the City of Santa Clara's 19.3 square miles, including eight Engine Companies, two Truck Companies, one Heavy Rescue Company, three Ambulances, and one Hazardous Materials Unit. Engine and truck companies are assigned one Firefighter, one Driver/Engineer, and one Captain. The Hazardous Material unit and Heavy Rescue Company each have one Driver/Engineer assigned. Ambulances are assigned two Paramedics, who may be from any rank. There is one suppression Battalion Chief on duty per shift. American Medical Response is the contracted ambulance service for Santa Clara County. Each station has a radius of approximately one and a half miles, which helps Santa Clara maintain an outstanding average response time of three minutes.

In 2007, the Santa Clara Fire Department answered 8117 alarms. Medical/rescue incidents were the most common, with 5712 alarms. The Department also responded to 106 chemical spills/leaks, 199 fires, 2100 other emergency incidents, and 1022 other non-emergency events.

For more information on the Santa Clara Fire Department, please visit our website at <http://fire.santaclaraca.gov/>.



## THE COMMUNITY

The City of Santa Clara is a family oriented and business friendly city in the center of Silicon Valley, located in Santa Clara County at the southern tip of San Francisco Bay, about 45 miles south of San Francisco. The City of Santa Clara is in a strategic regional location convenient to freeways, airports, railroads, expressways, light rail and other public transportation. "The Mission City," as Santa Clara is known, was founded in 1852 and has grown to a community of more than 115,000 residents and an employment base of approximately 135,000. With 19.3 square miles of tree-lined neighborhoods, thriving commercial and industrial centers, and 300 days of sunshine each year, it is an ideal location for individuals, families, and businesses.

Explore California's early Spanish history at Mission Santa Clara de Asis, founded in 1777, on the beautiful campus of Santa Clara University, the State's oldest institution of higher learning. Other points of interest and attractions include Mission College, the 100-acre Great America theme park, an award-winning Santa Clara Convention Center, Triton Museum of Art, the de Saisset Museum, Intel Museum, the headquarters and practice fields of the San Francisco 49ers football team, and numerous shopping opportunities including Westfield Shoppingtown - Valley Fair.

Voted one of ten All-America Cities in the New Millennium by the National Civic League, Santa Clara has a "High Tech, Human Touch, H2"™ approach to serving the community's needs. Santa Clara also offers the region's lowest combined utility costs in the nine Bay Area counties, with savings of 30 to 40% on electricity alone, and it is consistently rated one of the most affordable cities in the nation for business.

Santa Clara is a full-service Charter City with a Council/Manager form of government and an annual budget of approximately \$535 million. The City's financial stability ensures the highest levels of citizen and business service, low business taxes and solid real estate value, and it is also one of the safest U.S. cities with a population of 75,000+. Our outstanding public safety record includes the highest fire rating in Santa Clara County and some of the fastest emergency response times in the state.

With a focus on high quality customer services and its reputation, it is no wonder more than 4,500 companies, including many of the world's top technology firms, and thousands of long-time residents have made the City of Santa Clara their home.